

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT/
REGULATORY IMPACT REVIEW**
For
**PROPOSED GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT MEASURES
TO IMPLEMENT A 30 FM BOUNDARY LINE
OFF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

2003 PACIFIC COAST GROUNDFISH FISHERY

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PROPOSED ACTION: Implementation of a conservation area boundary line approximating the 30 fm depth contour for use as a 2003 management measure for federally managed Pacific groundfish commercial non-trawl gear (limited entry and open access) and recreational fisheries occurring off the coast of Southern California. This action will increase the area in which the fishery can take place, and decrease the closed area that was implemented to protect overfished groundfish species.

Abstract

The purpose of this action is to ensure that Pacific coast groundfish subject to federal management are harvested at optimum yield during 2003 and in a manner consistent with the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and the 10 National Standards enumerated in the Act. This action is needed to provide economic relief to commercial fixed gear and recreational fishermen in southern California while keeping impacts on bocaccio and canary rockfish, and other overfished groundfish species, minimal.

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1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 How this document is organized

This document is an environmental assessment (EA) and regulatory impact review (RIR) for proposed management measures to implement a conservation area boundary line approximating the 30 fm depth contour for federally managed Pacific Coast groundfish commercial fixed gear and recreational fisheries occurring off the coast of Southern California. This document tiers off of the *2003 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Groundfish Acceptable Biological Catch and Optimum Yield Specifications and Management Measures* (2003 Specs EIS) prepared by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in January 2003. This EA analyzes an additional management measure not originally analyzed in the 2003 Specs EIS which was intended to evaluate all possible management measures for the 2003 fishing year (January through December). This EA is a combined document for compliance with, not only the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), but also with the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (Groundfish FMP), the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), EO 12866 (which requires an RIR) and other applicable law.

- Chapter 1 discusses the ***purpose and need*** for the action and the process that has been used to develop these management measures. This description defines the need for, and goals and objectives of, the proposed action, which helps to determine the scope of the subsequent analysis.
- Chapter 2 outlines different ***alternatives*** considered to address the purpose and need. One of these alternatives was chosen as the preferred alternative.
- Chapter 3 describes the ***affected environment***, which provides relevant background information as a basis for the analysis contained in Chapter 4.
- Chapter 4 assesses the potential ***environmental consequences*** of the alternatives outlined in Chapter 2.
- Chapter 5 makes a ***determination about the preferred alternative*** and describes why it was chosen.
- Chapter 6 contains the ***finding of no significant impacts***.
- Chapter 7 explains how the proposed action is consistent with ***other applicable law***, including the Groundfish FMP and 10 National Standards set forth in the Magnuson-Stevens Act (§301(a)), the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act. This chapter also contains the RIR as required by Executive Order (EO) 12866 and describes how the alternatives address other relevant laws and EOs.
- Chapter 8 provides a ***list of preparers***.
- Chapter 9 lists the ***bibliography***.

1.2 The Proposed Action

The ***proposed action***, evaluated in this document, is the implementation of a conservation area boundary line approximating the 30 fm depth contour for use as a 2003 management measure for federally managed Pacific groundfish commercial non-trawl gear (limited entry and open access) and recreational fisheries occurring off the coast of Southern California. This action will increase the area in which the fishery can take place, and decrease the closed area that was implemented to protect overfished groundfish species.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is the same as that discussed in the 2003 Specs EIS, to ensure that Pacific

Coast groundfish subject to federal management are harvested at their optimum yield (OY) during 2003 and in a manner consistent with the Groundfish FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. However, the need for the proposed action is more specific than the need for the 2003 Specs EIS proposed action, which this EA tiers off of. For the 2003 Specs EIS, the proposed action was needed to constrain commercial and recreational harvests in 2003 to levels that would ensure groundfish stocks are maintained at, or restored to, sizes and structures that would produce the highest net benefit to the nation, while balancing environmental and social values. In this EA, the proposed action is needed to provide economic relief to commercial non-trawl gear and recreational fishermen in southern California while keeping impacts on bocaccio and canary rockfish, overfished groundfish species, minimal.

This document provides background information about, and analysis of, a proposed management measure for fisheries covered by the Groundfish FMP and developed by the Council. This measure must conform to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the principal legal basis for fishery management within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends from the outer boundary of the territorial sea to a distance of 200 nautical miles from shore. The Groundfish FMP establishes a framework authorizing the range and type of measures that may be used, enumerates 18 objectives that management measures should satisfy (organized under three broad goals), and describes more specific criteria for determining the level of harvest that will provide the greatest overall benefit to the Nation (termed "optimum yield" or OY). The management regime described in the Groundfish FMP is itself consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

As mentioned earlier, this document tiers off of the *2003 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Groundfish Acceptable Biological Catch and Optimum Yield Specifications and Management Measures* (2003 Specs EIS) prepared by the Council in January 2003. This EA analyzes an additional management measure, the proposed action, not originally analyzed in the 2003 Specs EIS which was intended to evaluate all possible management measures for the 2003 fishing year (January through December). The 2003 Specs EIS analyzed four alternatives for depth-based management for the commercial non-trawl gear fisheries (limited entry and open access), including no restrictions, no fishing inside 150 fm, no fishing in depths 20-150 fm and no fishing outside 20 fm. For the recreational groundfish fishery, the alternatives analyzed for depth-based management south of 36° N. lat. included: no fishing outside of 20 fm in the cowcod conservation area, no fishing inside 150 fm, and no fishing in depths 20-150 fm. Tables 1 and 2, condensed from the 2003 Specs EIS, describe these alternatives in more detail. None of the analyses in the 2003 Specs EIS analyzed conservation boundary lines marking no fishing between the 30-150 fm depth contours for the commercial limited entry and open access non-trawl fleets or a conservation area boundary line marking no fishing outside of the 30 fm depth contour for recreational fisheries. As mentioned earlier in this section, the Council felt the need to implement a new conservation boundary line approximating the 30 fm depth contour as a means to provide some economic relief to fishers in southern California. Because this new management measure was not analyzed in a previous NEPA analysis, this EA is required under NEPA to analyze the proposed 30 fm boundary line for use in groundfish management.

1.4 Background to the Purpose and Need

There are nine Pacific Coast groundfish species that have been designated as overfished. Those species are: bocaccio, lingcod, Pacific ocean perch (POP), canary rockfish, cowcod, darkblotched rockfish, widow rockfish, yelloweye rockfish and Pacific whiting. A species is designated as overfished under the Groundfish FMP if it falls below 25% of its estimated unfished biomass level or 50% of B_{MSY} , if known. All of the overfished species have some presence in southern California waters, however, only bocaccio, canary rockfish, lingcod, cowcod, yelloweye rockfish, and widow rockfish occur in abundance in shallow waters between 0 and 30 fm. Other overfished species tend to be more strongly distributed in northern waters. Of the overfished groundfish species that are abundant in southern California, bocaccio has the lowest OY for 2003, ≤ 20 mt, and is therefore the most constraining. Because many of the groundfish species co-occur with each other, a constraining species like bocaccio will limit the harvest of other co-

occurring species like canary rockfish.

When the 2003 specifications and management measures were developed for the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery in the fall of 2002, the Pacific Council's Groundfish Management Team (GMT) developed a bycatch scorecard to project and track estimated mortality of overfished groundfish species during 2003. The bycatch scorecard represents the best estimates of total catch and is an aid for making management decisions. The scorecard estimates which sectors are taking which overfished species and roughly how much of those species. This scorecard is updated throughout the year as catch data become available and was also updated using observer data. At the Pacific Council's June meeting, the scorecard was updated for inseason adjustments to be effective July 1. The proposed inseason adjustments presented at the June Council meeting remained below the OYs for all overfished species. Because estimated total mortality of all overfished species remained below their OYs for 2003, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) proposed an additional inseason management measure to change the commercial non-trawl and recreational boundary line south of 34°27' N. lat. from 20 fm to 30 fm to provide some additional fishing area to those sectors. The GMT and Pacific Council then reviewed analysis presented by CDFG on estimates of total mortality based on the proposed action. Estimated total mortality as a result of the proposed action brought estimated take of bocaccio and canary rockfish over their 2003 OY as a result of some of the alternatives. The Council and NMFS normally implement management measures that are projected to keep the fishery within the OYs for all species, especially overfished species. However, new information on the status of bocaccio that was presented at the June Council meeting indicates that bocaccio is healthier than had been thought at the beginning of 2003.

Chapter 6 in the Groundfish FMP describes the management measures the Council may recommend NMFS use and the process of establishing and adjusting such measures. Various biological reference points and information on fishery performance are used to determine, on an annual basis, the OYs for particular species or species groups. (See Section 3.2.1 in the 2003 Specs EIS for a description of these reference points.) The Groundfish FMP also describes "points of concern" and socioeconomic frameworks which help managers determine whether and what types of management measures are needed. Section 6.2 of the Groundfish FMP describes the deliberative process the Council must follow, and the parallel process NMFS uses to translate Council recommendations into regulations. NEPA-mandated environmental impact assessments are a central component of this process.

In accordance with the Groundfish FMP, since 1990 the Council has annually set Pacific Coast groundfish harvest specifications (acceptable and sustainable harvest amounts) and management measures designed to achieve those harvest specifications. Over 80 species of groundfish are managed under the Groundfish FMP, although only about 20 of these species are assessed for stock size and status on a regular basis. Each of the assessed stocks usually receives a stock assessment update once every two to four years. Thus, when the Council recommends a new set of harvest specifications in a given year, normally only specifications for those species with new assessments are changed from the previous year's value.

Harvest specifications and management measures for 2003 were shaped by new assessments for bocaccio, canary rockfish, and yelloweye rockfish, as well as sablefish and whiting. The bocaccio assessment that was used to determine the rebuilding analysis for setting 2003 harvest specification and management measures showed that bocaccio would not rebuild in the maximum time frame (T_{MAX}) even with zero fishing mortality (i.e., no fishing). The National Standard Guidelines never contemplated a situation where rebuilding would pre-empt all sources of potential fishing mortality. The fact the stock cannot be rebuilt within T_{MAX} was also not contemplated. Therefore, the National Standard Guidelines did not provide adequate guidance for this case. NMFS went to the Magnuson-Stevens Act for guidance. The biology of the stock and the needs of fishing communities argues against a zero fishing mortality scenario. NMFS determined the criteria to determine the appropriate level of fishing mortality were consistency with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, a high probability of not driving the stock to extinction or into further decline, not jeopardize future rebuilding, and to not drive the stock to be listed under the

Endangered Species Act (ESA). The bocaccio sustainability analysis (Table 3) was the guide for this decision, which supported adoption of a 2003 OY as close to 0 mt as possible and no greater than 20 mt. Although current bocaccio stock levels are low when compared to historic bocaccio biomass, bocaccio stocks are still larger than those of other, more specialized rockfish. Bocaccio is also broadly distributed along the coast and within the water column, making it susceptible to interception in a wide range of fisheries. Based on the above considerations, an OY of ≤ 20 mt was implemented for bocaccio for 2003. MacCall and He (2002b) estimate this fishing mortality rate would have a greater than 80% probability of causing no further decline in the next 100 years.

A new stock assessment and rebuilding analysis for bocaccio were released in May 2003 (MacCall 2003a, MacCall 2003b). The stock assessment record and details on review and selection of an updated rebuilding analysis is described in more detail later in this paragraph and in Section 3.1.1.1. The new assessment is different from the bocaccio assessment in 2002, which had indicated that the 1999 year class for bocaccio was weaker than previously thought. The 2002 assessment results were driven by the 2001 Triennial Survey which showed very low abundance of bocaccio and no sign of the 1999 year class. For the new assessment, additional information on larval abundance from the California Cooperative Oceanic Fisheries Investigation (CalCOFI), and both length and catch per unit effort (CPUE) data from recreational fisheries were used. The new data, which also assumed a new rate of natural mortality (0.15 as opposed to 0.20 in the 2002 assessment), indicate a much stronger 1999 year class and a sharp increase in abundance. The assessment and rebuilding analyses were reviewed by the Council's Stock Assessment and Review Panel (STAR Panel) and presented to the Council at its June 2003 Council meeting. To bracket uncertainty from the apparently conflicting signals in the different data sources, the STAR Panel recommended two models, STAR B1 and STAR B2. STAR B1 omits data from the Triennial Surveys and holds estimated recruitment constant to 1959, whereas STAR B2 omits the recreational CPUE data and holds estimated recruitment constant to 1969. Each of these models de-emphasizes the other data source. The Stock Assessment Team (STAT Team) considered a third model, STAT C, that considered both data sources to be important and thus, included both data from the survey and recreational CPUE, and holds estimated recruitment constant to 1959, and places a low emphasis on the stock-recruitment relationship to stabilize estimates of post-1999 recruitment. The results of the STAT C model were not complete during the STAR Panel review. The STAR Panel did briefly discuss the STAT C model and rejected the approach of the STAT C model because the two sources of data used in the model were contradictory. The results from the STAR Panel review and the third model produced by the STAT Team were then reviewed by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) at the June Council meeting. The SSC and other advisory bodies to the Council (GMT and GAP) made recommendations to the Council based on the new stock assessment and rebuilding analysis, which are considered to be the best available science. The SSC recommended use of the STAT C model for bocaccio.

Based on the new stock assessment and rebuilding analysis discussed above, the Council adopted a preliminary range of OYs for bocaccio for 2004. The range of OYs contemplated for 2004 (199-526 mt) is an order of magnitude higher than the ≤ 20 mt OY implemented for management in 2003. Based on the new bocaccio stock assessment and rebuilding analysis, the Council decided it could provide some relief in 2003 to the severely constrained commercial and recreational fishers in southern California without risk to the status of the stock. The Council also discussed the new 2003 stock assessment for widow rockfish, which supports a lower harvest for 2004 than for 2003 (181-501 mt versus 832 mt). However, current widow rockfish harvest rates seem to be slow enough to keep 2003 widow rockfish harvest within the proposed harvest range for 2004.

Beginning in 2003, the limited entry fixed gear fleet in California has been severely constrained by low trip limits and limited nearshore fishing opportunities, with the non-trawl RCA (the area closed to most fishing with non-trawl gear) extending from the 20 fm depth contour to latitude and longitude coordinates approximating the 150 fm depth contour. These management measures were designed to limit the incidental take of bocaccio rockfish and keep the catch of bocaccio within its 2003 OY of no more than 20 mt. The recreational fishing fleet in California has also been constrained, by a reduced season length

(July - December) and has generally been restricted to fishing inshore of the 20 fm depth contour, to minimize the incidental take of bocaccio. Prior to 2000, the recreational fishery has been year round. Since 2000, the recreational fishery has been closed for part of the year. Between 2000 and 2002, the California recreational fishery seasons have been from 8 to 10 months long. Beginning in 2001, some area restrictions were implemented. In 2003, the recreational fishery has been restricted to a 6 month season and it has been allowed mainly inside of the 20 fm (37 m) depth contour. Taking into account the most recent bocaccio stock assessment information discussed above and the economic hardship resulting from restrictive management measures necessary to keep the incidental catch of bocaccio within its 2003 OY, CDFG proposed to the Council that the 2003 bocaccio OY be flexible enough to allow for a modest increase in nearshore fishing opportunity. Specifically, CDFG proposed that during the months of September-December the eastern boundary for the non-trawl RCA and recreational fisheries closed area in southern California be moved from the 20 fm depth contour out to the 30 fm depth contour, except in the Cowcod Conservation Areas where the inshore boundary will remain at 20 fm. This boundary change was recommended by the Council because it would provide much needed harvest opportunity and economic relief for commercial non-trawl fishermen (limited entry fixed gear and open access non-trawl gear) and recreational fishers with a minimal increase in the expected take of bocaccio. This proposal would also allow commercial non-trawl and recreational fishermen some access to harvest species of groundfish that occur mainly on the continental shelf (in waters deeper than 20 fm) and have OYs that remain largely unharvested in 2003, such as vermillion rockfish.

Generally, stock assessments that are released in 2003 would only be used for management in 2004 and beyond. In this case, however, the new assessment and rebuilding analysis forecast are being considered to allow for a change in the management measures which may cause the OY for bocaccio to be exceeded. Because of the new science for bocaccio that indicates that a modest increase in bocaccio harvest in 2003 should not interfere with stock rebuilding and because of the severe restrictions commercial non-trawl and recreational fisheries in southern California are experiencing, the Council recommended to NMFS to use the new bocaccio information as a means to relieve restrictions on southern California fisheries without additional risk to the status of the stock.

In summary, in addition to a general need to manage fisheries for sustainable harvests, the proposed action satisfies several objectives. Management is based on "the best available science," the second National Standard enumerated in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Regular stock assessments for target species in groundfish fisheries, whenever possible, are an example of the application of this requirement. As a result of a new bocaccio stock assessment during 2003, the best available science indicates the additional estimated take of bocaccio as a result of moving the boundary line to 30 fm, while slightly above the OY for 2003, is below the range of proposed OYs for 2004. Continuing efforts to improve the quality of data and analysis support assessment and catch accounting. Because of the decline in several groundfish stocks revealed by these assessments, preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks is a paramount concern. However, the ability of fishers to access healthy stocks is also considered, because a competing goal in the Groundfish FMP is to maximize the value of the groundfish resource. Meeting the conservation requirements of the statute while taking into account the direct social benefit from groundfish is another way to understand the purpose and need of this action.

1.5 Scoping Summary

Scoping is an "early and open process" for determining the range of issues and alternatives for implementing the proposed action (40 CFR 1501.7). The process by which the Council adopts annual harvest specifications and management measures and adjusts those management measures through inseason actions allows early and open scoping and public involvement. Public and stakeholder involvement lies at the core of the Council process. The Council, subcommittees, and advisory bodies all hold public meetings with opportunity for public comment. Further, advisory bodies directly represent stakeholders. For groundfish management these bodies include the Groundfish Management Team

(GMT), with representation from state, federal, and tribal fishery scientists; the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP), whose members are drawn from the commercial and recreational fishery, processing, and conservation sectors; and the Ad Hoc Allocation Committee, which provides advice on allocating harvest opportunity among the various fishery sectors.

In the past, the development of annual specifications was accompanied by an environmental assessment (EA). For the 2003 specifications, early scoping revealed the action might have significant impacts and generate substantial controversy. Therefore, the Council and NMFS decided to prepare an EIS without first preparing an EA. A summary of scoping opportunities and public comments received during the scoping process for the 2003 Spec EIS are described in Section 1.5 of the 2003 Sepcs EIS. Public comments received were separated into categories, including bycatch, charter boats, commercial fisheries, fathom lines, etc. (See Table 1.5-2 in the 2003 Specs EIS) Some of the comments relevant to the proposed action in this EA are as follows: charter boats avoid canary rockfish, charter boats don't catch many bocaccio, significant loss of income in past 2-3 years, set closure at 6-70 fm in southern California, bocaccio are abundant in southern California, most of the live fish fishery is already concentrated within 20 fm, southern California anglers have not participated widely in the Council process, recreational fishing has larger economic impact than commercial fishing, closures in recreational fishing south of Mendocino [40°10' N. lat.] increases possibility of collisions in smaller fishing areas, and artisanal fisheries in southern California are highly regulated and sustainable.

Comments for the proposed action in this EA were received from three people at the June 16-20, 2003 Council meeting in Foster City, CA.

Darby Neil of Morro Bay (CPFV Owner) summarized a study by Dan Fink (United Anglers) detailing the decline in income from sport fishing landings in southern California. Many operations were down from 25% to 55%. Coastwide, tackle stores, suppliers, sport fishing businesses and support community are feeling the economic impacts. The study shows the economic impacts get worse the further north you go because of the higher dependence on rockfish in the north. These communities and businesses need as much economic relief as possible. Moving the boundary line out to 30 fm will help, especially if it's from Lopez Point [36° N. lat.] south to Mexico border. Understand that canary rockfish becomes constraining. There are some buffers this year, such as fishing opportunity for albacore. Some effort will shift to albacore because they have shown up earlier than usual, usually don't show up until August. In the south, targeting will be on surface fish come July 1, not targeting rockfish, but that's typical every year. Commented that MRFSS data also provides a buffer because the data has been high year after year. Another buffer is that there were higher bag limits and hook limits in the past. Request to use rational data to make this decision.

Bob Osbourne of United Anglers, Southern California commented on the dire economic situation that the recreational community is in between northern Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. Commercial fishermen have long understood the importance of maintaining steady markets and have found success by metering fish into the market. Unlike commercial fishermen, the problem with recreational fisheries is in maintaining customers when fishing opportunities inadequate. Santa Barbara recreational fisheries are evidence of that. Need to be careful in economic analysis of these issues and thresholds. The recreational fleet in southern California should not be impacted by canary rockfish, canary rockfish are rare in southern California. In 40 years of recreational fishing in southern California, including a few seasons working rockfish in southern California as a deckhand on party boats, I've never seen one. Council's interest is to protect jobs where practicable; it just makes sense to find a solution in this case.

Bob Fletcher, President of California's Sport Fishing Association remarked on moving the boundary line from 20 to 30 fm south of Point Conception [34°27' N. lat.]. Can't remark on moving the line from south of Lopez Point [36° N. lat.]. Restated Tom Barnes, CDFG, comment that the estimated canary impacts are a maximum impact. Talked about the marine reserve at San Miguel, an area where if there were canary rockfish south of Pt. Conception, they'd be found; and the Cowcod Conservation Area (CCA).

Canary rockfish have been recorded taken near Bag Rock, now part of the CCA. Another point, that Tom didn't bring up, is that commercial fishermen at times have found it to their benefit to run trips out of Santa Barbara, go up around the corner from Conception as far north as Arguello, make their catch and deliver back into Santa Barbara. All catches didn't come from south of Conception, even if landed south of Conception, although all of these landings were counted toward the catch south of Conception. Movement of the boundary line to 30 fm would send a message to the very strapped recreational and CPFV anglers that the Council recognizes there is a new stock assessment for bocaccio that will allow for more access to the resource next year and can help out with a little more access this year to get through the rest of year. Understand problems with changing the OY mid-year, although would probably recommend that be done. Thus, just asking that the Council give back something in recognition of the new abundance of bocaccio and in recognition that canary is really not an issue south of Conception.

2 ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING PROPOSED ACTION

This chapter describes the alternatives, or potential actions. There are four alternatives analyzed in this EA: status quo, moving the conservation area boundary line from 20 fm to 30 fm between 36° N. lat. and the US/ Mexico border, moving the boundary line from 20 fm to 30 fm between 36° N. lat. and 34°27' N. lat., and moving the boundary line from 20 fm to 30 fm between 34°27' N. lat. and the US/Mexico border. These alternatives differ from each other in the area of ocean off southern California that would open to fishing inshore of 30 fm. These alternatives were presented as a proposal by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) at the Council's June meeting. They were developed as options to relieve restrictions on commercial nontrawl and recreational fisheries in southern California and reviewed by the Council for their impacts on bocaccio and canary rockfish, overfished groundfish species. All alternatives are proposed for September through December 2003 only. This time frame was selected because it had less impacts on overfished species than considering the alternatives for July through December of 2003. In addition, there was not adequate time to complete the required analyses and draft regulations before September 1, 2003. The proposed action would only apply to the remainder of the 2003 fishing year, until December 31, 2003. Regulations for 2004 will be analyzed in a future NEPA analysis. All of the alternatives consider whether or not to shift a boundary line in waters along different portions of the southern California coast. Thus, the alternatives differ in the area (measured in square miles) of ocean that would open to groundfish fishing with commercial nontrawl and recreational gear. The conservation area boundary line is a management measure used to delineate where fishing with a particular gear type, such as fixed gear, or in a certain sector of the groundfish fishery, such as the recreational sector, may occur. For 2003, large gear and sector specific closures have been implemented, known as rockfish conservation areas (RCAs). The non-trawl RCA, a closed area affecting the commercial non-trawl fleet (both limited entry and open access non-trawl gear) is the subject of all four alternatives. In addition, the boundary line which marks the closed area for the recreational sector is also the subject of all four alternatives, although this boundary line is not part of an RCA per se. The boundary line for the recreational sector is simply termed a boundary line or management line and recreational fishing for groundfish is prohibited seaward of that line. Generally, the RCA boundary lines are generated by a series of latitude and longitude coordinates that when connected by straight lines between points, make a line that approximates a fathom contour. The reason for re-creating the fathom contour with a series of latitude/longitude coordinates is for enforcement purposes. In-the-air enforcement cannot read the actual fathom contours and must rely on a series of coordinates approximating the line to determine whether vessels are or are not fishing in the closed areas. The exception to this standard is the 20 fm boundary line off southern California. California has used a 20 fm depth contour for groundfish management since 2001. The boundary line had already been established in management as a fathom contour and not a line with a series of coordinates approximating the fathom contour. In addition, this line falls almost entirely in California state waters. While this complicates enforcement by air surveillance, CDFG recommended and NMFS approved that the 20 fm line remain a depth contour line for 2003.